

# JOURNAL

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## New York Entomological Society.

EDITED BY HARRISON G. DYAR.

Publishes articles relating to any class of the subkingdom Arthropoda, subject to the acceptance of the Publication Committee. Original communications in this field are solicited.

### EDITORIAL.

Our criticism of a work by Dr. Henry Skinner (Journ. N. Y. Ent. Soc., xiii, 217, 1905) has brought a rather hysterical reply (Ent. News, xvi, 217, 1905), which we should not notice, except that it attempts a misrepresentation of our Review of the Hesperiidæ (Journ. N. Y. Ent. Soc., xiii, 111, 1905). Dr. Skinner cites two errors. We presume that he is right in both cases; the mistakes can be easily corrected by transferring *manataaqu* to *Thymelicus* and proposing a new name for *Atrytone* Dyar (not Scudder). This does not bear at all upon the question of generic classification, which is the real issue. Dr. Skinner claims to have studied the genera. We fail to see any evidence of it in his remarks, which are actuated only by a consideration of specific values. When Dr. Skinner gives us some original work based on structural characters, we shall begin to believe that his study of genera has been more than an opinionated attempt to discredit them.

To refer to Mr. Prout's remarks in our last issue, advocating the "historical method," or rule of the first reviser in the fixation of generic types, we presume the weakest point in his argument is shown by the phrase "given the literature." The trouble is that the literature is not given. President David Starr Jordan (*Science*, n. s., xxii,

598, 1905) finds further objection to the first reviser rule. He says: "The objection to it is that no one has yet defined the first reviser so as to separate his rights from the rights of different meddlers." Mr. Prout would except faunal lists; but why except anything? The only way to have any definiteness is to include the "meddlers" on the same basis as the "reviser" and take as type the one first mentioned by anybody. This would involve even more of what President Jordan calls "otherwise profitless labor in bibliography" than following the first reviser, for it would mean the examination of all literature for some stray mention of a genus and typical species. No doubt this is asking too much; we fear there is no fixity or uniformity in the "historical method." Lord Walsingham, we believe, has expressed the opinion that a writer should know the literature of his subject. If there were any way of knowing that this desirable condition had been attained, we should cordially endorse the view; but even the best posted author is liable to discover accidentally some overlooked reference that may vitiate his carefully constructed historical system. He is always in a position of uncertainty.

We return to the method of first species as the only one promising fixity. President Jordan says: "The method of beginning with a leading species or *chef de file* as typical representative of each genus, to be described in full while the others were disposed of in comparative sentences, was adopted by Lacépède, Cuvier, Valenciennes, Poey and other authors. In Ichthyology this has given reason for the choice of the type of the genus by page precedence. This method was raised to the dignity of a universal rule by Dr. Bleeker and others. It is a pity it was not adopted earlier, for it would have given fixity, a matter which in nomenclature far outweighs all others." The objections to the method are, we believe, two. The first is that it would change many of the names now in use; the second that Linnæus and others usually placed their typical species in the middle of the series and the less known or aberrant ones at the ends. To obviate these we suggest that in the case of Linnæus and other authors definitely known to have used his method, the *central* species be taken instead of the first. These authors would have to be enumerated in the rule and all others held to the first species as type. But unfortunately, a glance over Linnæus' tenth edition shows that this would be no solution of the problem, for taking the middle species as type is not more in consonance with modern ideas than taking the first. In fact, in the Coleop-

tera, to take the first species uniformly as type would cause considerably less change in the present classification than to take the middle species. In the Lepidoptera, either course would cause a very radical change, about equal in either case. It has been proposed to cite as type of the Linnæan genera the common European species included under each. This is objectionable, because it is not capable of general application, as there are some groups without any common European species and others with two or more.

We are reduced therefore to squarely favor the first species method. Let us make what changes this requires now, which are perhaps not so many, and have the names finally settled on a permanent basis.

### BOOK NOTICES.

*The International Code of Zoölogical Nomenclature as Applied to Medicine.* By CH. WARDELL STILES. Bulletin No. 24 of the Hygienic Laboratory, Treasury Department, Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service of the United States. Washington: Government Printing Office. 1905.

This very important paper presents the international code in available form with explanatory comment by the author, who is well qualified to explain the code, being the secretary of the permanent committee of the International Zoölogical Congress. There are 36 articles and a valuable appendix giving rules for the transcription of Greek words and geographic names to be in Latin form. These rules would be more valuable if there were any obligation in the code itself to respect them, which there is not. Unfortunately the code does not embody the recommendations which we have urged in editorial comment in this Journal and in an article with Mr. Caudell on the types of genera (Journ. N. Y. Ent. Soc., XII, 120, 1904). We object to articles 4, 5, 14, 25 and 30.

Articles 4 and 5 do not go far enough. They state how the family name shall be formed, but do not tell us how to select the type genus. Is it to be the oldest one, or the one first selected historically? When changed, why should the name not go to the next oldest one (as advocated by us), or to the one next used for family type historically, rather than to the substituted name (as advocated by article 5)?

Article 14 states that specific names in adjective form must agree